

SPRING 2012

# Accent

AN AVILA UNIVERSITY  
PUBLICATION



## Earl Baker, Jr. '92

*"Avila is such a great place because they start at the basics. ... You're on stage a lot. That's the best training an actor can have."*



## Global & Community Outreach



Avila University President  
**Ron Slepitz, Ph.D., CSJA,**  
with Jerusalem Center  
for Jewish-Christian Relations  
Program Director  
**Hana Bendcowsky**

If you spend some time walking on campus, talking to faculty and staff, eating lunch with students, attending a play or participating in a public forum, you will quickly realize that Avila University's scope extends beyond the confines of our physical boundaries. It is global.

As you read this issue of *Accent*, I encourage you to visualize all of the ways the Avila family touches the lives of others. Our cover story, featuring Earl Baker Jr. '92, sets the stage for how our strong theatre program has trained students in the performing arts, many of whom perform on or provide technical expertise to stages throughout the world.

Our global outreach can also be seen in a variety of ways. Avila faculty members and students are engaged in global initiatives that range from interdisciplinary courses with travel abroad to robust discussions on campus that incorporate international speakers. Hana Bendcowsky, an expert on Jewish-Christian relations from Jerusalem, engaged the campus community in March. Hana's visit was made possible by the Consulate General of Israel to the Midwest and co-sponsored by Avila. The insights we gained about the interconnectivity between our countries and the importance of interfaith dialogue are immeasurable.

Extending the vision of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, Avila continually finds ways to serve all people without distinction. Who better to demonstrate this charism than S. Marie Joan Harris, CSJ, Ph.D., who was honored recently as a Woman of Influence by *KC Business* magazine. With more than 50 years as a CSJ, Marie has devoted 42 years to the Avila community, with roles ranging from professor of chemistry to her current role as provost and vice president for academic affairs. During her tenure, she has touched the lives of many. While we have known for years the jewel we had among us, now the broader community has caught a glimpse of this remarkable woman we count as our colleague, mentor and friend.

Leading by example, S. Marie has influenced many people throughout the years. Her focus on service to others is further exemplified by the many wonderful service projects that Avila's students complete each year. In fact, Avila has been named to the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for the fourth straight year. In total, Avila University students clocked more than 200,000 community service and service learning hours in 2011. This equates to a value of more than \$4 million in service to the community.

As you can see, we engage in global outreach, interfaith dialogue and service to others, all of which speak to the transformative nature of learning at Avila and have helped lead Avila to the highest recorded full-time spring enrollment. Enjoy this issue of *Accent*, and join us in a future Opening Doors tour of campus to learn more about the many exciting things taking place on campus.

Ronald A. Slepitz, Ph.D., CSJA  
President

(To learn more about Opening Doors tours of campus, see page 25.)

# Accent

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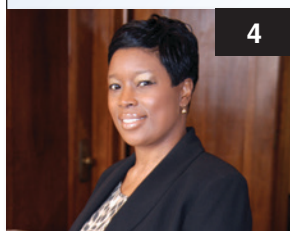
## ON THE Cover

Earl Baker, Jr. '92

From Kansas City to New York,  
acting is Baker's passion and profession.

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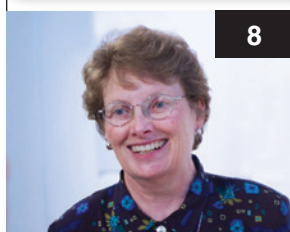
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Tamela Handie '93, '99 discusses the day's headlines with Kansas City Mayor Sly James.

## Tamela Handie '93, '99 serves as senior advisor to KC mayor, but is writer, poet at heart

A little quality time with Dr. Phil made a major impact, but the pathway that carried Tamela Handie '93, '99 to the mayor's office in Kansas City, Mo. actually began nearly a decade earlier, as an undergraduate student at Avila University.

It was at Avila where Handie received not only a bachelor's in business administration (with an emphasis in marketing) in 1993 and, six years later, a master's in business administration (emphasis in general management), but also nurturing and mentoring from many of her professors. True to Avila's mission and the heritage of the Sisters of St. Joseph, her professors inspired her desire to serve others and give back to her community.

It's that desire to serve which led her to her current position, as senior advisor for operations to Kansas City Mayor Sly James.

"Tamela adds a unique voice and perspective to my staff," James said. "When you work in the mayor's office, you never really know what each day might bring. Tamela's experience at City Hall, knowledge of city government processes and her one-of-a-kind personality help the tough days not seem so bad and make the best days even brighter."

"(This position) gives me an opportunity to assist the mayor in making Kansas City an outstanding place for all of its citizens to call home, regardless of where they live or what they look like," Handie said.

Of course, Handie didn't earn her position as one of the

mayor's three senior advisors overnight. After earning her undergraduate degree, she went to work at American Century, the iconic investment company headquartered in Kansas City. She was there for nearly four years before leaving for a position as an account adjuster at Chrysler Financial Corporation, where she worked five years before accepting a job at General Motors Acceptance Corporation as a commercial lending analyst.

Handie began working for the city of Kansas City, Mo. in 2001 as an auditor in the city's aviation department. An experience soon after that changed her life.

She was one of 42 individuals chosen out of more than 15,000 applicants to participate with Dr. Phil McGraw in his five-day "Get Real Challenge," a reality TV experiment that was featured on the Oprah Winfrey Show. The challenge was designed to help the participants overcome negativity, bad habits and/or toxic attitudes that stemmed from childhood or adult experiences and interactions.

"That experience was life-changing, and I left Harpo Studios and Chicago with a sense of purpose and excitement about the future that I'd never had before," Handie said.

Handie worked her way up through city government, as an analyst with the finance department, to now, where she's senior advisor for operations to the mayor, coordinating his internship program and volunteer recruitment for mayoral-appointed boards and commissions.



Handie also serves as the mayor's office liaison to the Kansas City Transitional Grant Area Planning Council, a group that plans and decides how to use grant funds secured for the purposes of providing care to HIV patients and prevention services. The funds also ensure that the system of care effectively serves all eligible individuals living with HIV/AIDS in the service area.

It's a responsibility that is near and dear to Handie's heart because two uncles died from AIDS. They were brothers, Handie said, and both died at the young age of 36. One of those uncles, despite being greatly weakened from the disease, traveled to Kansas City from Illinois to watch Handie receive her undergraduate degree.

"My uncles had a passion for life, and they fought the disease with courage," she said. "Watching them suffer was heartbreaking to say the least. That's why I plan to do everything in my power to help stop the spread of HIV and AIDS."

However, she said it was that experience with Dr. Phil that brought out her true passion – to be an author, orator and educator like her idol, Maya Angelou. After attending a local event in March, 2006, where Angelou was the featured speaker, she followed her advice and immediately established a mission for her life, which is to encourage the discouraged, disappointed, disillusioned and dissatisfied – to draw, as she said, "from the dormant reservoirs of strength, power and courage lying within them."

Handie's mission reverberates in a poem she penned in July, 2004 called, "Courage." The words came to her somewhat serendipitously during a quiet morning at home, and out of nearly 100 poems she's penned, it is her favorite.

"Courage is a constant reminder to face challenges in my life with diligence and determination so that I overcome them, rather than allowing them to overcome me," she said.

She has already had a short story published in *Keeping the Faith*, a book written by talk show host, author and political commentator Tavis Smiley and was a contributing writer in *Minority Success* magazine in 2002. She is a proud graduate of the Dale Carnegie Leadership Program, where she received awards for breakthroughs and outstanding performance.

While Handie has accomplished much in a short time, it is only the beginning.

"I have aspirations to write self-help books and fiction," she said. "One day, I'd also like to teach at Avila."

Handie does not have far to look for a role model. Her father taught algebra, trigonometry, physics and calculus for 30 years in public schools, and Handie herself has been a guest lecturer in the Avila MBA program.

Through everything she has accomplished, one aspect shines through – her commitment to the community.

"Tamela possesses a unique combination of talent and drive," said Wendy Acker, MBA, Ph.D., associate dean of the School of Business and MBA director. "It's great to see her advocacy on behalf of others, which helps make the community a better place to live." 📖

*Accent* SPRING 2012



## Courage

Written by Tamela LaShell Handie

I know that morning has come for me  
 When the sunlight gently kisses my face  
 And thrusts me forward into a sea of thankfulness  
 Though I travel obliviously on this journey  
 I know that whatever lies round yonder bend  
 Is waiting anxiously for me  
 Hoping desperately that I will greet it with a boldness  
 Characteristic of those that dance with bulls  
 When that time comes,  
 I hope that I will look that thing directly in its face  
 With a steady gracefulness  
 For to blink even one eye could send me  
 Plummeting to defeat and I refuse to be defeated  
 Fear is no longer an option  
 The only option is believing that I can conquer all that life serves me  
 And at the end of the day,  
 When night casts its silver shadows upon my brow,  
 I will rest with one eye open  
 And prepare myself for my next morning kiss.



# President brings global lessons home to Avila

## Slepitza visits country steeped in tradition, innovation and conflict

**D**escribing and summarizing all he saw, heard and experienced during a six-day visit to Israel in brief, concise verbiage and thoughts is pretty much impossible, Avila president Ron Slepitza, Ph.D., CSJA, admits. The issues and complexities of the culture within the country and those in surrounding territories and countries simply don't allow for brief summation.

But, of the many extraordinary things Slepitza witnessed and experienced during his pilgrimage, which came about because of his involvement as a partner in interreligious dialogue programs with the Jewish Community Relations Bureau, was the high level of entrepreneurial development in Israel, in terms of its scientific, engineering and education systems.

Slepitza and other university presidents from the Kansas City area spent considerable time in conversation with presidents and administrators of Israeli universities.

"It was very clear from our visit that the universities are strong," Slepitza said. "Their students are focused, and there is an attitude of possibility, innovation and determination among them."

Slepitza said he credits much of that to the system in Israel which requires all males to serve three years of military service upon graduating high school and all females two years.

"In Israel, their youth discover talents, develop skills, learn leadership and team work, and develop life-long relationships through their military experiences," Slepitza said. "Further, they not only learn self-discipline and to be grounded in values; they are taught to question authority, to examine issues and questions and to find solutions. All of this promotes a can-do attitude."

Israelis who have gone through military service stay

connected with their units by serving together one month per year for the next 20 years as part of their obligation as reservists. This builds deep bonds of life-long friendship and reliance.

"For their military to be successful, they must be really efficient in using all the resources they have," Slepitza said. "They have to be entrepreneurial, they have to adapt, and they have to be relentless in considering where threats and opportunities lie. These are powerful life lessons learned by most at this early age."

By the time Israelis complete military service and reach college, which is completed in three years, they know what they want to do and are fully invested in the country's political and social issues. Universities all have a set of entrepreneurial enticements encouraging innovation. The government subsidizes public universities up to 90 percent, holding tuition costs to \$3,000 per year.

This could help explain why Israel is the only country on earth where land that once was desert is receding, where salt water can be converted to drinkable water, where they recycle 70 percent of their water, and have green and sustainable farming and other technologies second to none. Necessity breeds innovation; but living in a state that's existence is constantly at risk helps them address the "big issues" of life.

Slepitza said he felt completely safe during his entire stay, largely due to an expansive police and military presence on the streets. That proved to be a good thing as the political tensions that have existed as long as Israel has been a country certainly weren't lost on the visitors.

"The most interesting thing I saw was how close and interconnected everything is," he said.

As Slepitza said, Israel is a young country, but one





steeped in thousands of years of tradition and history that includes conflict not only between Jews and Arabs but among various Christian groups as well. That makes problem solving all the more difficult. Memories are long, and their weight is heavy.

Slepitz drew an analogy of the U.S. and Soviet Union back in the height of the Cold War in the 1970s and '80s. Only, imagine being able to look out your back door and see the Soviets a few hundred yards away. That's how Israelis and Palestinians live every day.

"The question becomes: How do you make sense of things?" Slepitz said.

Israelis and their neighbors have struggled with this over thousands of years, so of course, Slepitz and his traveling companions weren't going to find answers in a matter of days. But one thing is for certain – getting an up-close look at the questions, and country, was fascinating indeed. Israel has much to offer, and we can learn quite a bit in dialogue with its people.

One of the outcomes from Slepitz's trip is an even stronger connection between Avila and other groups involved in interfaith dialogue. One example is the opportunity to host renowned Jewish scholar Hana Bendcowsky at Avila to lead a discussion on interfaith relations. As program director at the Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations, Bendcowsky provided great insights into the complexities of interfaith dialogue.

"As we continue to expand our educational outreach with a focus on the global community, we are enriched intellectually and spiritually," said Slepitz. "We expand our horizons to see what is possible working together now and into the future."

To learn more about President Slepitz's trip to Israel, visit <http://avila.edu/israel/>. 📷

Photo on left: The Western Wall and one of the three most holy sites in the Muslim World

Photos on right: **(top)** Renu Kahtor, Ph.D., Chancellor of the University of Houston System and President of the University of Houston, her husband Suresh Kahtor, Ph.D., and Avila University President Ron Slepitz, Ph.D., CSJA, in the presentation room at the College of Management Academic Studies; **(middle)** A delegation of university presidents outside the Wall of Jerusalem; **(bottom)** Jewish Community Relations Bureau/American Jewish Committee (JCRB/AJC) Executive Director Marvin Szneler; Avila University Board of Trustees Chair Bob Hunter; Jerusalem Center for Jewish-Christian Relations Program Director Hana Bendcowsky; Ron Slepitz, Ph.D., CSJA; and Director of Interreligious Affairs at the JCRB/AJC Rabbi Alan Cohen







## S. Marie Joan Harris and Avila alums named women of influence

**A**vila University's own S. Marie Joan Harris, CSJ, Ph.D., was honored in March for her contributions and devotion to the university and the community at large. *KC Business* magazine selected S. Marie, Avila's provost and vice president for academic affairs, as a member of the 2012 Class of Influential Women.

Two Avila alums, Teia Blanchfield '07 and Kay Julian '82, also were named to the class.

S. Marie, who in 2011 celebrated her golden jubilee as a Sister of St. Joseph, as well as Blanchfield and Julian, were featured in the March issue of the magazine.

"This is a great honor for Marie, and we couldn't be happier for her and this recognition," said Ron Slepitz, Ph.D., CSJA, Avila president. "Her commitment as not only a CSJ but also 42 years at our institution is truly commendable and makes this well deserved. She has served Avila and the broader community in many capacities, and we're proud to have her on our leadership team."

Out of the 150 women recognized with this honor since 2007, S. Marie is the only academic leader from a private college to make the list.

S. Marie began her career at the university in 1970 as an assistant professor of chemistry. She went on to become an associate professor of chemistry, chairperson for the Department of Natural Science and Mathematics, vice president and dean for academic affairs and provost and vice president for academic affairs. One of only three remaining sisters on campus actively serving the Avila community, she was instrumental in the creation and development of the Avila Advantage program for working adults. She has shaped a dynamic and creative faculty, who are recognized as influential teachers and scholars. She led the initiative to create the Avila Value Statements as well as the successful implementation of the 2002-2008 Strategic Plan.

"The love of chemistry and care of people she ignited in me are still present in my life," said Ibraheem Badejo, who earned a bachelor's in chemistry at Avila in 1984. Through his own efforts and innovation, as well as the background he gained while at Avila, Badejo has been awarded 26 U.S. patents, more than 100 international patents and leads innovation efforts at Johnson & Johnson.

"Looking back 30 years, I am very blessed to have crossed paths with her," Badejo said. "Her love and care always showed in her dealings with students."

S. Marie has served the community at large by serv-



ing on nine boards providing leadership, guidance and influence. She received the Chief Academic Officer Award from the Council of Independent Colleges in 2003, was Professor of the Year at Avila in 1985 and received the University's Medal of Honor in 1982.

Fellow honoree Blanchfield serves as patient access manager at Shawnee Mission Medical Center and is the first point of contact for incoming patients. She oversees the center's billing and admission and taps into her faith to ease stressed patients. Last year, she implemented upfront collections and reached 100 percent pre-registration for scheduled patients.

Julian, president of the Mid America Chapter of the National MS Society, has seen her chapter double in territory and size due to realignments with other chapters, yet her Bike MS event reached the Million Dollar Club and cites strong campaigns in both Walk MS and Dinner of Champions.

This was the sixth year that *KC Business* has recognized successful women committed to mentoring, personal growth and community involvement. The magazine has honored nearly 150 Kansas City leaders in the corporate, non-profit, artistic and entrepreneurial communities. 🍷



Avila University President Ron Slepitz, Ph.D., CSJA, with *KC Business* magazine Influential Women Teia Blanchfield '07 and S. Marie Joan Harris, CSJ, Ph.D.

At Avila, we've always known Sister Marie Joan Harris, CSJ, Ph.D., is an influential woman. With *KC Business* magazine's recognition of S. Marie as a member of the 2012 Class of Influential Women, we are excited to share this news with all of Kansas City, Avila alumni, and friends of the University.

Special thanks to the following individuals and businesses that made contributions in honor of S. Marie. Their generous contributions will support Avila students with scholarships.

**Ms. Deana Angotti**  
**Anonymous**  
**Mr. David M. Armstrong**  
**Dr. Ibraheem T. Badejo, '84**  
**Mr. Grant M. Beck**  
**Mr. Terry P. Black, '83**  
**Ms. Martha Blackman**  
**Mr. Paul Bookmeyer**  
**Dr. Amity H. Bryson**  
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**Mrs. Karin L. Capron, '73**  
**Ms. Michele M. Chollet, '80**  
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**Ms. Darby G. Gough**  
**Dr. Charlene J. Gould**  
**Mrs. Nancy Hand, '71**  
**Mr. J. Robert Hardin, '78**  
**Mrs. Angela M. Heer**  
**Mr. Keith R. Jaloma**  
**Ms. Mary E. Jenison, '82**  
**Mr. & Mrs. Brandon J. Johnson**  
**Mrs. Carolyn R. Koppes, '72**  
**Ms. Margaret A. Lambi**  
**Mrs. Kay A. Lehr, '74, '77**  
**Ms. Judy K. Logwood**  
**Ms. Rosana P. Biondo**  
**Dr. Sue Ellen McCalley**  
**Mr. Patrick M. McCarty**  
**Mrs. Janet A. McManus**  
**Mrs. Janell M. Neal, '10, '12**  
**Mrs. Kathleen G. Newman, '70**  
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**Ms. Mary T. Paine**  
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**Mrs. Sandra J. Winch, '82**  
**Mrs. Susan E. Wulff, '09**

**To make a gift in honor of S. Marie Joan Harris, CSJ, Ph.D., visit [avila.edu/give](http://avila.edu/give)**





## Psychology chair chosen for standard-setting team

**T**hrough a grant from the Lumina Foundation, the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) launched an initiative to work with college and university faculty from multiple states to discuss performance in higher education. Marcia Pasqualini, Ph.D., chair of Avila University's Department of Psychology, was the only psychology professor from a private Missouri university selected to work on the project, which encompassed the three-state area of Missouri, Indiana and Illinois.

"We are pleased Marcia was selected for this outstanding initiative," said Ron Slepitza, Ph.D., CSJA, president of Avila University. "We are fortunate to have someone with Marcia's expertise as a member of our faculty and know that her vast experience and knowledge of psychology will serve the team well."

A meeting of the group brought together 30 faculty members along with representatives of MHEC, the Lumina Foundation and the Institute for Evidence-Based Change to discuss the foundation, process and logistics of the initiative.

As part of the evaluation, or "tuning" process, faculty members create shared understandings of the knowledge and transferable skills students in specific academic disciplines and professional fields must demonstrate upon completion of their degrees. The process helps clarify to students, parents and policymakers what degree holders know, understand and are able to do.

According to Pasqualini, much of this work centers around an initiative of the Lumina Foundation called "Goal 2025," which has a stated purpose of increasing the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees or credentials to 60 percent by 2025. Pasqualini said that percentage has hovered below 40 percent for the last 40 years.

"Our work is very discipline specific," Pasqualini said. "Basically, what are the knowledge and skill sets students in psychology should be able to demonstrate once they graduate? We want our psychology graduates to have a clear career pathway ... to be able to get a job." 🗣️



# FBI agent profiles famous case with business students

If you're a real cinephile, you might recognize the name Bob Herndon. He was one of the real-life special agents for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) who worked the case portrayed in the movie, "The Informant," released in 2009 starring Matt Damon.

A classroom of business students got the chance to meet the real Herndon in the flesh and listen to his stories of that now-famous case as well as other tidbits on how one goes about becoming an agent with the FBI.

Herndon, 49, told the class he recently celebrated his 25th year with the Bureau investigating lawbreakers.

"It's surprising what humans will do, not only in the white-collar area, but in every area of crime we work with in the FBI," he said.

Many among Herndon's audience were students majoring in accounting or finance, an educational background that would serve them well should they ever decide on a career in government law enforcement, he said.

"When I first approached the FBI about going to work there, a recruiter told me three things," he said. "Remain athletic, take speech classes and get a degree in law or accounting."

Herndon received degrees in accounting and business administration from Kansas University and worked as a staff accountant before earning his CPA certification.

An accounting degree is helpful, he said, because that field especially requires the use of critical and logical thinking skills critical to being an effective FBI agent.

"An accounting degree gives you avenues to work in many different capacities," said Herndon, who currently works on the technical side in special operations in the Kansas City, Mo. area. "The values they look for now are more diverse, such as foreign language skills."

The physical fitness requirement mainly was to demonstrate initiative and drive more than actual physical capabilities, Herndon said. Studying speech serves well in being comfortable talking with witnesses and suspects ... or, on a witness stand.

"When you're sitting up there being bombarded with tough questions by a zealous defense attorney, you sweat in places you've never sweated before," he said.

Herndon told the students the entire hiring process takes about a year. Candidates who make it through that report to the FBI training facility in Quantico, Va. for 4 ½ months of very intense training. That's followed by two years working with a training agent. Herndon said he spent those two years of his career in New Orleans, then transferred to Washington D.C., where he went under deep cover for three years on a national security case.

From there, he transferred to the Bureau's office in Springfield, Ill. That's where he became involved in the case involving Archer Daniels Midland Co. (ADM), a corn

processing company which was fixing prices for one of its products, lysine. Herndon and his partner, Brian Shepard, worked closely with ADM whistleblower Mark Whitacre on this case, which was highlighted in "The Informant."

Herndon admitted that "it was pretty cool" to have one of his cases featured in a movie. In fact, he said, being an FBI special agent has been pretty cool throughout his 25 years with the agency. And, as he told the students who sat enraptured during his nearly 2 1/2- hour talk, it could be rewarding for them as well.

"You're making a difference in peoples' lives as an FBI agent," he said. "You're making a difference for your communities, and in some cases, your country." 🇺🇸





# CAMPUS IMPRO

**A new anatomy and physiology lab, residence hall and a renovated dining hall are some of the current improvements happening on campus. These projects will continue to enhance the learning and living environment at Avila and nurture Eagle pride.**

## **Campus Residence Expansion**

An important component of student life is to live, learn and study together on campus. A vibrant residential community creates an “around the clock” learning environment which offers many opportunities for one’s growth and development. With more than 300 students presently living on campus, we have reached capacity. Construction of a new residence hall will allow us to increase our capacity to have more than 410 students living on campus. The new residence hall will provide suite style living, with 4 to 6 students sharing a suite, and will open the Fall semester of 2012.



**Join us for a tour of campus soon to see these improvements firsthand.  
See page 25 for information on future Opening Doors tours.**



# EVENTS

## Health Sciences Renovation

Avila University remains at the forefront of offering innovative nursing and health science educational opportunities. The Anatomy and Physiology lab in O'Reilly Hall is undergoing a critical renovation this summer to ensure we are providing the latest technologies for students to be effective science and health care leaders.



Thank you to our generous donors for making this expansion of the Anatomy and Physiology lab possible:

**Clinical Reference Laboratory, Inc.**

**Courtney S. Turner Charitable Trust**

**Dr. Thomas J. Fritzlen**

**Lockton Companies**

**The Massman Foundation**

**McCullough Family Foundation**

**The McGee Foundation**

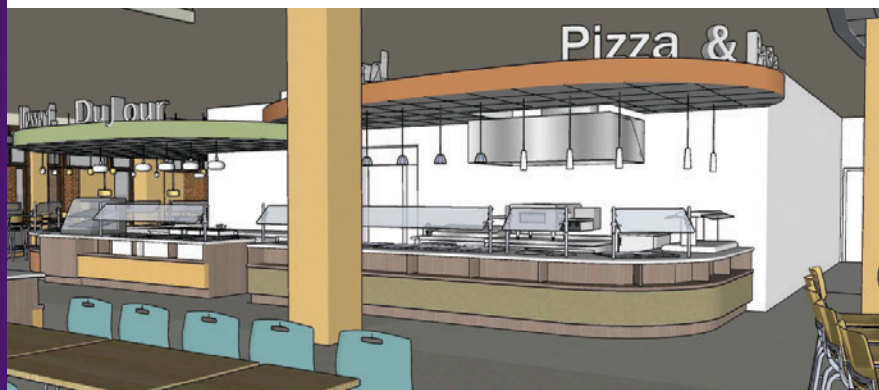
**Oppenstein Brothers Foundation**

**The Sunderland Foundation**

**Westerman Foundation**

**William T. Kemper Foundation**

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## Dining Services Renovation

To address growth in the overall student population and more students living on campus, the Marian Center dining hall is being renovated into a café-like central gathering place for Avila's community of students. A glass enclosure will be added over the existing outdoor patio to increase the dining hall's capacity by more than 50 percent, while creating a new sunroom for year-round use. The renovated dining hall will be completed by August 2012. 🏠





## Jerusalem Farm to “serve the dear neighbor” in downtown Kansas City

The northeast corridor of downtown Kansas City, Mo. is not unlike any other urban core that dots the U.S. landscape. Rows of century-old homes line parallel streets, the vast majority in various states of disrepair. Others sit completely dilapidated alongside unkempt vacant lots and shuttered storefronts.

But help is on the way to this area. A new volunteer service initiative, sponsored by Avila University, promises to give new hope to this blighted area, all while serving the mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet that Avila has espoused from day one of its existence.

The initiative took root in the mind of Dave Armstrong, Avila's director of mission effectiveness and campus ministries. Over the past 10 years, Armstrong had taken numerous trips with Avila students to Nazareth Farm and Bethlehem Farm, service mission retreats in rural West Virginia which housed student volunteers from all over the country and put them to work helping better their surroundings.

When Armstrong heard that Kansas City social service organization Don Bosco Community Center was looking for another nonprofit entity to come in and use one of its properties, he immediately thought of all the wonderful experiences he and students had at those farms and figured, why couldn't one be created in an urban setting in Kansas City?

Say hello to Jerusalem Farm.

Starting this summer Jerusalem Farm, a two-story brick house and surrounding property will house up to 24 volunteers and six staff members with a mission of providing service to the community – especially home repair needs – and creating a community of service. Volunteers participate in service retreats of up to one week. Group retreat weeks are made up of college groups, high school groups, and other weeks will be for families to retreat and serve together.

Another mission of the farm is to be entirely green. Or-

ganic community gardening will be one of the ministries that will be offered to the community. The ultimate goal, much like those at Nazareth and Bethlehem Farms, is to become largely self-sustainable, providing most if not all food for staff and volunteers through the gardens and housing chickens on the property.

Armstrong estimates total service hours per year among staff, volunteers and summer help coming out of Jerusalem Farm to be nearly 30,000.

“Everything just fell into place,” Armstrong said. “This house became available. I had my mind on two people in West Virginia to come out and run it. They will begin in April 2012. We're all pretty excited about it.”

Ben Cascio, executive director of the Don Bosco Community Centers, said he expected Jerusalem Farm to be a great asset to the area on two fronts.

“To have a mission like Jerusalem Farm to do work where it's affordable and makes it safe for people to live in a home is a really big deal,” he said. “Then, there's the green philosophy part of it, where they come in and clean up and make blighted space green, garden space. That's needed badly as well.

“It's a wonderful solution to a very large problem.”

Avila is sponsoring Jerusalem Farm until the farm becomes incorporated as its own non-profit.

“The farm plans to be incorporated on its own no later than Jan. 1 of 2015, but I anticipate that it will be much sooner than that,” Armstrong said. “Avila will be associated with a program that will make a big difference in the inner core of Kansas City. This direct connection will give Avila a prime opportunity for inner-city immersion in the inner core of Avila's home, Kansas City.

“Jerusalem Farm matches well to our mission and values.”

The farm's values combine the four cornerstones of prayer, community, service and simplicity, with the Sisters of St. Joseph commitments of right relationships with





**Dave Armstrong, CSJA**

Director of Mission Effectiveness  
and Campus Ministries

God, self, others and the Earth.

"Serving the dear neighbor in this prayerful setting provides a really uplifting and valuable service experience," Armstrong said.

It will require about \$75,000 annually to fund the program, which will be sought from corporate, community and individual funding sources.

"We also will be looking for in-kind donations," Armstrong said. "We are in need of paint supplies, tools, drills, hammers, saws, wrenches, axes and crowbars. We need all kinds of garden tools ... a washer and dryer, industrial refrigerator, stove, oven and other furniture."

For more information about how to donate to Jerusalem Farm, contact Armstrong at 816-501-2423, or go to [jerusalemfarm.org](http://jerusalemfarm.org). And, you can 'like' Jerusalem Farm on Facebook to follow the farm's progress. 📱



(Front) Satoko Senoo (SJ), Joan Kessler; (Middle) Dave Armstrong, Jaimie Harter, Megan Wilgenbush, Jenny Gauhari; (Back) Tim Aderman

## Alternative Spring Break trip

A group of Avila students and staff travelled to West Virginia March 10-17 to work with the Bethlehem Farm Community. At the Farm for the week they lived out the gospel cornerstones of prayer, service, community and simplicity. They served the people of the Appalachian region in projects that included home repair, painting and building a fence at a horse riding farm for disabled children. The group also learned greater care for the earth through organic gardening.

The group met up with students from Notre Dame and Virginia Commonwealth University to live and work together in community.

If you would like to underwrite the costs of Avila's service initiatives, contact Robin Rowland at 816-501-2450 or email [Robin.Rowland@avila.edu](mailto:Robin.Rowland@avila.edu) 📧



# New social work chair immerses himself in quality and re-accreditation of program

Since arriving on the Avila University campus in mid-August, new chair of the Department of Social Work Francis Origanti, Ph.D., has been largely preoccupied with one thing. The task at hand is making sure his department is fulfilling all the new standards necessary for it to keep the accreditation it already holds from the Council on Social Work Education.

In fact, Origanti just recently returned from Atlanta, where he was trained to be a site visitor. He'll travel to different schools to make sure their standards fit as well as his own.

"It's been busy, but it's been great," said Origanti, who arrived at Avila after seven years teaching at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb. "We are going for the next phase of re-accreditation in 2014. We need to get prepared for that. Lindee (Peterson Wilson, MSW) and I will be sharing the writing of that report."

It was involvement with Rotary International in his native city of Chennai, India, that introduced Origanti to social work – a calling that isn't that popular in his homeland.

"Most in India go to school in engineering, computer science or medicine," he said. "My parents wanted me to go into statistics."

Undeterred, Origanti pursued his passion and earned

his bachelor of arts in sociology from Loyola College in Chennai in 1996 and went on to graduate with his master's in social work from the same school in 1998.

However, when it came to wanting to pursue his Ph.D. in social work, Origanti found opportunities in India limited. He found what he needed at Catholic University of America in Washington D.C. He arrived in the U.S. in 2000 and graduated there in 2004.

"Catholic University gave me a good scholarship and also plenty of research opportunities," he said. "Being in Washington D.C., I was able to become involved in policy, which was good."

After seven years working at Creighton, which had about 7,000 students, he said the move to Avila, with about 2,000, was agreeing with him. He enjoys the pace and working with both traditional and non-traditional students.

In addition to writing his department's self-study for accreditation, Origanti said he's resurrected the Community, Student and Faculty Advisory Committee. The purpose of the committee is to enlist the input, feedback and support of knowledgeable professional social workers to enhance the direction and quality of the social work program at Avila University.

He's also working with Jude Gonsalvez, Ph.D., fellow Chennai native and program director at Anna Maria College in Massachusetts, to pull together a group of students and travel to his homeland to study social situations and institutions there.

Mostly, though, it's all about re-accreditation and enhancing the social work program for Avila students—helping them see the impact they can make on the lives of those in the community. ■







## MBA alum rises to challenge of raising funds for Vietnam library

**W**hen two acquaintances approached Debora Merrill '01, '04 and asked her to head up fundraising for the construction of a library in the central highlands of Vietnam, her immediate reaction was that they must be joking.

Sure, Merrill had an undergraduate degree in business administration from Avila University and had earned her master's in business administration, with an emphasis in marketing, from Avila in '04. But stepping out and asking people for money to fund a library half a world away wasn't exactly in her experiential wheelhouse.

And, actually, as Merrill tells it, she wasn't exactly asked to do the job so much as drafted. Through her husband, she'd become involved with a group of retired special forces veterans known as 12th Group. At the group's annual summer gathering in 2010, two men in the group who had become involved with an organization called Children's Library International approached Merrill about their plan. They wanted to build a library in Nam Dong, a village in the upper highlands of central Vietnam where Col. Roger H.C. Donlon, the first special forces medal of honor recipient during the Vietnam War, served.

The two men, Ross Worley and Chuck Theusch, needed money to build the library, and they thought Merrill was the person to raise it.

"They pretty much just told me, 'We need you to raise funds for the library; if anyone can do it, you can,'" Merrill said.

Merrill said she drew upon every skill and every bit of knowledge she'd learned during her days at Avila. She asked everyone in 12th Group, the Special Forces Association, high school and college students, a woman born in Vietnam who runs a French restaurant in the Kansas City area. In all, she raised money from 18 states and three countries. She raised nearly \$48,000 in 18 months.

"We're still a little short, but not enough to not get it done," she said. "We're not stopping."

Merrill received her reward for her hard work at the end of last year when she traveled to Nam Dong and saw the constructed library for herself. The library was dedicated Dec. 6, 2011.

The library serves Montagnard children, indigenous to Vietnam but ignored by the current government. The library is stocked with children's books and learning materials, but adults are encouraged to attend. Most have very rudimentary reading and learning skills.

What struck her most about Vietnam, however, was the spirit of the Montagnard people.

"The people over there are very family-based," she said. "They love their children. They work hard. And, they're happy."

Merrill said the opportunity to help spearhead this project and visit Vietnam was an interesting one. She wasn't certain what she was eating half the time, but she would not trade the experience for anything. 🇻🇳



Debora Merrill (second from right) poses with local Vietnamese university students





# Acting Up

**From Avila to Yale to Julliard –**

**Discovering theatre led Earl Baker Jr. '92 to success as professional actor**

**T**he acting world is brimming with countless stories of chance encounters and opportunities that appear as though they dropped from the heavens above. Earl Baker Jr. '92 knows this. He had no plans to pursue an acting career after graduating from high school in urban Kansas City, Mo. in the 1980s. His ambitions were of a more stable and traditional nature – something working with computers or perhaps working in the restaurant industry.

But fate had something else entirely in mind for Baker. While not exactly having the cache of, say, Lana Turner being discovered at the soda counter at Schwab's Pharmacy, an impromptu conversation Baker had with a friend back then was just as life-changing.

And, it all led him to Avila University.

After graduating from high school, Baker spent the next couple of years bouncing aimlessly around various

technical schools and junior colleges in the Kansas City area. He enrolled at DeVry University with the aim of learning a trade having to do with computers. That lasted 1 ½ years.

He then spent short stints at three area community colleges before deciding to leave education and Kansas City behind, packing up and moving to Florida to run a hotel restaurant. However, that didn't last long either. He found the summer humidity in Florida unbearable and





Above: Earl Baker Jr. '92 appears in the Denver Center Theatre Company's production of "Superior Donuts."

Below: Baker takes the stage once again with Charlene Gould, Ph.D., dean of Avila's College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences during a recent campus visit.

discovered he liked the restaurant industry about as much as he did working on computers.

Because one coast didn't work out for him, Baker figured he'd try the other and once again loaded his car, this time for California. He figured he'd break up the trip by making a pit stop on the way back through his hometown. And, since he was stopping through, he figured he'd call an old friend for lunch.

Baker met and became fast friends with Chris Glaze '80 when the two worked at a restaurant in Overland Park, Kan. in 1988. With his tall stature—Baker stands 6-feet-4—and booming James Earl Jones-like voice, Baker had a presence that immediately drew Glaze, a theatre major at Avila, to him. In turn, Baker found himself fascinated by Glaze's involvement in performing arts as an actor in various theatre groups in the Kansas City area.

When Glaze met Baker for lunch on that life-changing day in 1988, he found himself listening to a lost soul, a friend who had no idea what he wanted to do with the rest of his life. He looked at his friend and offered an alternative Baker hadn't considered. *Why not enroll at Avila and give acting a try?*

Baker didn't waste much time giving Glaze an answer. It wasn't as though he had anything else waiting for him.

"I just kind of fell into it," Baker said. "I mean, who doesn't love the movies? I was lucky I had a friend involved in it."

To say that Baker, by this time in his mid 20s, was raw in the craft of acting when he started at Avila would be a gross understatement.

"This great-looking, great-sounding man came to me saying he wanted to act," said Charlene Gould, Ph.D., dean of Avila's College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. "He didn't know up-stage from down-stage."

Baker admitted as much, saying, "I knew absolutely nothing. If you told me to go upstage, I'd walk toward the audience."

What Gould also found, however, was a student willing to work and learn, one who absorbed everything she had to teach him as though his very life depended on it.

"He worked so hard at learning the craft of acting," Gould said. "He had the looks and had the voice. He had the instincts, but was just at ground zero when it came to acting."

It didn't take long, however, for the light to click on for Baker, and Gould said she can remember the exact moment that occurred.

"I remember a scene class where he played Hamlet's father's ghost," she said. "And, I just put my clipboard down. I knew he had arrived. At that moment, I knew this kid was going to do something great."

Glaze also saw great talent in his friend.

"I cast him in the first show that I directed," he said. "You could just tell that he had that quality. And, he's one of the nicest people I've ever known."

As someone who came into the world of acting as a complete novice, Baker said Avila was the perfect place to get started.

"Avila is such a great place because they start at the basics," said Baker, who graduated in 1992 with a bachelor of fine arts in musical theatre and a bachelor of arts in theatre. "It was a lot of fun right from the very beginning. You're not allowed to fall on your face...You're allowed to develop your own process."

"Probably the best thing is that you had so much time to perform. They had theatre in the round, there were a lot of shows, a lot of classroom time. You're on stage a lot. That's the best training an actor can have."

It also didn't hurt that Baker met his wife, Marya Anne Ripperger '90, at Avila. A music and English major at Avila, she is a charter middle/high school principal in Harlem. Living in New York City with their two daughters – Alyssa and Amara – the Bakers have experienced a long, winding path to success.



"Avila was such a great first step in a long progression," he said.

Baker's next step after graduating from Avila was even more impressive. He was one of 16 – out of 2,000 applicants – to be accepted into Yale University's prestigious three-year graduate acting program.

"I was lucky I got in the first time," Baker said. "It was a great honor. Now, I coach applicants on how to get into the program."

What followed, Baker said, was three years of putting on 30-40 shows per year. Basically, living acting 24/7 which, by this time, he wouldn't have any other way.

"It was a pressure cooker," he said.

Professionally, Baker has performed workshops with such famous actors as Academy Award-nominated Cicely Tyson and Oscar winners Olympia Dukakis and Frances McDormand. He acted in a 2011 film, "Win Win," starring Oscar nominee Paul Giamatti, appeared in the 2007 movie, "The Visitor," in which star Richard Jenkins was nominated for an Oscar and played a variety of roles in many other projects, including TV and off-Broadway theatre.

Last year, Baker performed in regional theatre at The Denver Center. As 2011 rolled over to 2012, he was searching for that next job.

"People say there's a 99 percent unemployment rate in this work, but I don't think that's true. There's work. It's just a matter of whether you can afford the down time. You learn to budget out for six months."

Baker said he's been offered teaching jobs at various acting academies. In fact, he's taught master classes at the famed Julliard School of Dance, Drama and Music at Lincoln Center in New York City.

But don't expect him to give up performing anytime soon, not as long as the bug remains in his bloodstream.

"I do like teaching," he said. "But I still love acting more. You have to look at it realistically. I keep a pretty high percentage of bookings. I'm usually down to the final group in getting the job."

"I've invested a lot of time and energy at this point in this. I can't quit now."

According to the good friend who brought Baker to Avila in the first place, retirement for an actor of Baker's talent shouldn't even be a consideration.

"He'll keep on working forever, because he's just got it," Glaze said. 🐾



Earl Baker, Jr. '92 hangs out with actor Paul Rudd and writer Joe Tiboni at the Sundance Film Festival.





# Alums star in theatres across the country

**C**harlene Gould's face lights up and the pride swells when talking about Earl Baker Jr. '92, a student of hers 20 years ago who went on to achieve a graduate degree at Yale, has taught at the famed Julliard School and has established a successful career acting in movies and theatre. (See story, p. 18)

So, imagine the glow when Gould, Ph.D., and dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences and theatre professor at Avila University, expands that conversation to the many other alums who have walked out of the halls of Goppert Theatre and gone on to achieve great professional success in their chosen fields of the performing arts. Former students like Alicia Cabrera Hill '02, who went on to a very successful career in modeling and acting since earning her bachelor of fine arts in theatre. Cabrera Hill, who was crowned Miss Kansas USA in 2003, recently worked in a feature film alongside Academy Award-winning actress Tatum O'Neill.

"The acting skills I learned at Avila absolutely helped me," Cabrera Hill said.

The success of Cabrera Hill and other alums is a source of pride for the Avila performing arts faculty.

"It's so meaningful to have students who are eager to learn, and then after they graduate, go on and do what they love in life," Gould said. "That's the most rewarding part of teaching theatre.

"It's not about producing stars. It's about training performance majors and design/technical theatre majors who produce good work.

"How lucky are we to be able to go out and do what we love?"

And, how lucky is Avila to have such a long and distinguished list of successful alumni out there making their marks in the performing arts. Following are just a few examples of alums doing standout work:

**April Dawn-Gladu, '96**, is a theatre director in New York City and is on the faculty at the Metropolis Performing Arts Centre.

**Michael Derting, '01**, is an actor and director working with the Appetite Theatre Company in Chicago.

**Danielle Laubach, '08**, is working on her master of fine arts at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pa. in scene design for theatre and film.

"I'm in one of the best programs in the country for what I'm studying, and I wouldn't be here if it weren't for the opportunities I received at Avila," Laubach said. "Avila allowed me to build a fantastic portfolio, compete for a fellowship and get into grad school."

**Sayra Player, '01**, has acted in theatre on Broadway, acted on popular TV show *Law & Order* and has worked with such famed actors as Harvey Kietel in feature films. She most recently acted as the lead in the film, *A Little Closer*, which was shown at this year's Chicago International Film Festival and shown at festivals in Rotterdam, Netherlands and Lisbon, Portugal.

**Jennifer Pike, '06**, works as equity stage manager at the Unicorn Theatre in Kansas City, Mo.

**Rachael Roth, '10**, does technical theatre work at Disneyland.

**Brenda Washington, '76**, has been an award-winning news reporter for KMBC Channel 9 in Kansas City since 1985.

**Pete Weber, '07**, works locally in the Kansas City area doing improvisational theatre and teaches at the Kansas City Rep. He works with the Theatre League and also hosts his own radio show, featuring jazz and blues music.

**James Wright, '84**, is a well-known actor and singer in the Kansas City area, working at various playhouses, including the Unicorn, New Theatre Restaurant, Starlight Theatre and Quality Hill Playhouse.

"There is a misconception that students who graduate with a theatre degree will never work in the future," Gould said. "That simply is not true. Avila's professional program is designed to train students for a career in the theatre. If prospective students say they want to be a Broadway star or win an Academy Award, we tell them that we hope that too, but what we offer is solid training, which sets them up for success to work professionally."

Avila's theatre program also benefits from a tremendous working relationship with the Theatre for Young America (TYA) in Kansas City. This summer, the university will host a camp in conjunction with TYA that takes place between July 23-27. Students will work on and then perform a production of *Dracula: The Twilight Years*, based on the Bram Stoker novel. Classes during the week include technical theatre as well as voice, body and imagination classes to help aspiring actors.

All Avila alums and the public are always encouraged to support these programs by attending the summer TYA production or any of the four theatre productions produced by the theatre department each year.

"We have a strong performing arts faculty that is dedicated and committed to Avila and the students," Gould said. "This is at the heart of our success." 🎭

Theatre alums pictured at left: Alicia Cabrera-Hill '02, Danielle Laubach '08, and Pete Weber '07





# *Avila University's 36th Annual Steer Dinner Raising a Legacy of Stars*

With generous support from alumni and friends of Avila University, the 36th Annual Steer Dinner on February 18 raised more than \$500,000 for the university's scholarship fund. Nearly 500 guests came together for this special evening to enjoy a delicious "steer" steak dinner, a live and silent auction, and dancing. Steer Dinner began in 1977 when a group of area businessmen donated "Jimmy C" (the American Royal prize steer) to Sister Olive Louise Dallavis. Thirty-six years later, Sister's resourcefulness continues through the efforts of the 2012 Steer Leadership Team: Kevin and Susan McGreevy, honorary chairs; Joe and Sue Fahey, event chairs; and David '76 and Geri Frantze, event vice chairs, as they raised scholarship gifts for Avila students most in need. Thank you to all who made the evening a success!



Josh and Rebecca Henry '05, '08 support Steer Dinner as event volunteers.



David Frantze '76, Steer Dinner vice chair, participates in the Live Auction with a generous gift to the Sister Olive Louise Dallavis (SOLD) Fund. David also serves on Avila's Board of Trustees.



Kevin McGreevy (center), Steer Dinner honorary chair, is surrounded by Avila's Nightingale nursing scholarship recipients (l-r): freshman Ana Telar, freshman Helen Bui, junior Vanessa Watson, and sophomore Karessa Gibson. McGreevy started the Nightingale Fund at Avila in 2009 to assist nursing students with tuition assistance.



Avila University President Ron Slepitzka, Ph.D., CSJA with his wife Suzanne greet David '76 and Mary Kerr as they arrive to Steer Dinner.





S. Marie Joan Harris, CSJ, Ph.D., (center), Avila provost and vice-president for academic affairs, stops to thank Joe and Sue Fahey for their leadership to Avila as the Steer Dinner event chairs. Joe also serves as vice chair of Avila's Board of Trustees.



Ron Slepitza, Ph.D., CSJA with his wife Suzanne and Tom and Jeanne Olofson '92, '94, '11 visit during the Steer Dinner social hour. Jeanne also serves as an Avila Board of Trustees member.



During the Steer Dinner program Kansas City, Missouri Mayor Sly James (center) honored Kevin and Susan McGreevy with a proclamation from the City of Kansas City, Missouri to thank them for their philanthropic service to the community in the area of higher education. Their fundraising efforts have provided student scholarships to more than 90 students during the past 20 years.



Kevin and Tricia Lyon '00 catch up on Avila nursing news with Susie Fetsch, Ph.D., Avila dean for the School of Nursing.



Mark and Amy Thompson visit with Steve and Anne Dunn '75 before dinner is served. Both Mark and Steve serve as members of Avila's Board of Trustees.



The Class of 1962 was well represented at Steer this year with (l-r) Helen Hagel; Lee Robben, Avila Board of Trustees member; Theresa Kempf; S. Rose McLarney; LaNora Hughes and Anne Hess in attendance.



(l-r) Gene Mackey, Avila adjunct professor; Charlene Gould, Ph.D., Avila dean for the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences; Ron Slepitza, Ph.D., CSJA with his wife Suzanne welcome Alicia Cabrera-Hill '02 and her husband Josh Hill to Steer Dinner. The Hills are expecting their first child this spring.



# Avila secures national recognition for community service

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and the U.S. Department of Education has honored the nation's leading colleges and universities, students, faculty members and staff for their commitment to bettering their communities through community service and service learning.

Avila University was admitted for the fourth consecutive year to the 2012 President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for its work in serving the dear neighbor, one of the key missions of the university and a pillar of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, who sponsor the university.

The Corporation for National and Community Service, which has administered the Honor Roll since 2006, admitted a total of 642 colleges and universities for their impact on issues from literacy and neighborhood revitalization to supporting at-risk youth. Avila is one of only four universities in the Kansas City metropolitan area to be named to the Honor Roll.

"Through service, these institutions are creating the next generation of leaders by challenging students to tackle tough issues and create positive impacts in the community," said Robert Velasco, acting chief executive officer of CNCS. "We applaud Avila University and the other Honor Roll schools, their faculty and students for their commitment to make service a priority in and out of the classroom. Together, service and learning increase civic engagement while fostering social innovation among students, empowering them to solve challenges within their communities."

Serving the dear neighbor always has been integral to Avila's stated mission. Upon arrival at the school as new students, the entire class, along with student mentors, faculty and staff, are loaded onto buses and taken to an area food bank. In 2011, Avila University students performed more than 200,000 community service and service learning hours. This equates to a value of more than \$4 million in service to the community.



"We are pleased and proud to be a recipient of the 2012 President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll," said

Marie Joan Harris, CSJ, Avila's provost and vice president for academic affairs. "We take our commitment to serving the dear neighbor very seriously at Avila University, and it's a great tribute to the dedication to service of our students, faculty and staff that we accept this honor."

On campuses across the country, millions of college students are engaged in innovative projects to meet local needs, often using the skills learned in classrooms. According to the annual CNCS Volunteering in America report, 3.1 million college students dedicated more than 312 million hours of service to communities across the country, service valued at more than \$6.6 billion.

The Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency that leads President Obama's national call to service initiative, is a strong partner with the nation's colleges and universities in supporting community service and service-learning. Last year, CNCS provided more than \$200 million in support to institutions of higher education, including grants to operate service programs and the Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards for college tuition and student loan repayment.

CNCS oversees the Honor Roll in collaboration with the U.S. Departments of Education and Housing and Urban Development, Campus Compact, and the American Council on Education. Honorees are chosen based on a series of selection factors, including the scope and innovation of service projects, the extent to which service-learning is embedded in the curriculum, the school's commitment to long-term campus-community partnerships and measurable community outcomes as a result of the service. For a full list of recipients and descriptions of their service, visit [NationalService.gov/HonorRoll](http://NationalService.gov/HonorRoll). 📌



Credit: Jeremy Ruzich



SPRING 2012 Accent



**May 3, 2012**

## Thirsty Thursday Happy Hour

**Ugly Joe's Bar & Grill • 1227 W. 103rd St. • Kansas City**

Join fellow alumni from 5 to 7 p.m. for free appetizers from the Alumni Association (drinks on your own). Meet up with old friends or make some new ones! The first ten people to arrive will receive a cool door prize!

**May 7, 2012**

## Opening Doors Tour

**Thornhill Art Gallery, Dallavis Center • 5:30 to 7 p.m.**

Campus has never looked better! Join President Ron Slepitz, Ph.D., CSJA for a personal tour to see first-hand the exciting changes at Avila. Appetizers and beverages will be provided.

**May 23, 2012**

## Alumni Association Board Meeting

**Barefoot Room, Marian Center • 6 p.m.**

Bimonthly board meeting. All alumni are welcome to attend.

**June 9, 2012**

## Alumni Day at Worlds of Fun

Grab the family and hit the park! Join us for a group picnic and then spend the day in the park, all at a discounted rate of \$25.00. Tickets are limited, so make sure and purchase early!

**June 22, 2012**

## Opening Doors Tour

**Barefoot Room, Marian Center • 7:30 to 8:30 a.m.**

Campus has never looked better! Join President Ron Slepitz, Ph.D., CSJA for a personal tour to see first-hand the exciting changes at Avila. Breakfast will be provided.

**June 23, 2012**

## Alumni Night / T-Bones Game

**Community America Ballpark**

**1800 Village West Parkway, Kansas City, KS**

Ready for some fun well done? Join the Alumni Association for a night at the T-Bones game! Ticket price includes an all-you-can-eat barbecue dinner before the game with sides and 2 drink tickets (Miller Lite and Coke products). The game v. the Amarillo Sox starts at 7:05 p.m. Tickets are only \$20.

**October 12-14, 2012**

## Avila Homecoming

Save the date!

**For more information or to make reservations for these events, contact Susan Randolph at (816) 501-3780 or [susan.randolph@avila.edu](mailto:susan.randolph@avila.edu).**



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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Maiden: \_\_\_\_\_ Class Year: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ News: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Office of Advancement, Avila University, 11901 Wornall Rd., Kansas City, MO 64145 E-mail: [advancement@avila.edu](mailto:advancement@avila.edu)



## Missouri Mavericks

**T**he area was cool but the ice was hot on December 3 when 40 alumni, family and friends watched the Missouri Mavericks take on the Dayton Gems. Guests had a good time participating in chuck a puck, and several appeared on the dance cam projected on the scoreboard! The Mavericks won the day and everyone had a great time.



## Alumni Ski

**O**n Saturday, January 28, Avila alumni and students took to the hill at Snow Creek in Weston, Mo. Alumni and friends joined students to take over the slopes. If you missed out this year, make plans to join us next year for some ski and snowboard fun!

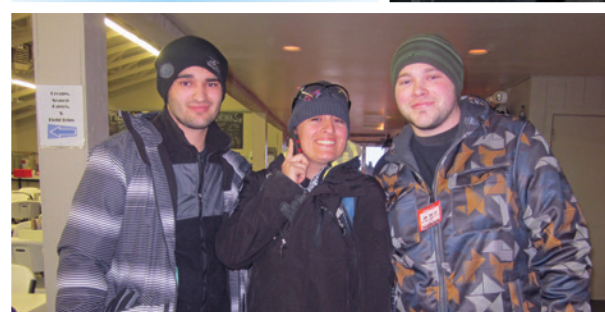
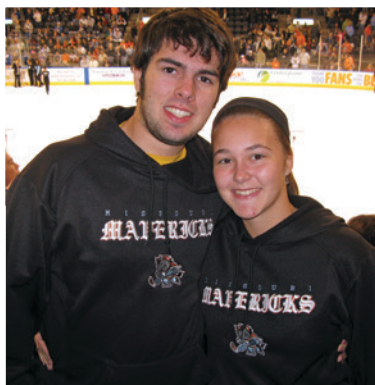
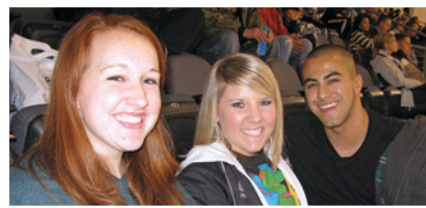


## Alumni Basketball

**T**here were players and spectators galore on February 25. More than 100 alumni and their family members came to the Alumni Day at the Mabee Fieldhouse. Fans were able to watch the Alumni women's and men's scrimmages, cheer on the Avila men's and women's teams as they took on Benedictine College, and enjoy complimentary snacks in a V.I.P. area.









**'55 Rose Mary Schultz Hughes** retired – after four-plus decades – as a nurse in 2000, but has since volunteered as a pastoral care volunteer in the emergency department at Bayfront Medical Center in Florida. She graduated from the College of St. Teresa with her degree in nursing.

**'71 S. Barbara Dreher, CSJ**, was recognized by Fontbonne University in St. Louis for distinguished service to the CSJ Charism. After being named co-director of vocation education for the Sisters of St. Joseph, St. Louis Province, S. Barbara later was selected as chancellor at Fontbonne. She serves as director of mission advancement of the St. Louis Province and serves on several boards throughout the St. Louis area. S. Barbara received her bachelor's in elementary education from what then was known as Avila College.

**'74 Kay Nolop Lehr** is a reporting analyst at the Kansas University Medical Center.

**'75 Helena Laird White** is a medical technician at the Kansas University Medical Center.

**'76 Roberta Hessel Knopke** is a fifth and sixth grade science teacher at the Immaculate Conception Dardenne School and lives with her husband Bob and children Patti and Steve in Lake St. Louis, Mo. In May, she was awarded the Archbishop Raymond L. Burke Teacher Recognition Award for the archdiocese of St. Louis Catholic Schools. She has taught at Immaculate Conception Dardenne for the past 15 years.

**'76 Sally Burton-Hoyle** is an associate professor at Eastern Michigan University.

**'81 Gary Davis** became a partner/general manager in the Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Comedy Club, featuring top comics from the

Comedy Zone group of clubs World Wide.

**'82 Kay Julian**, president of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Mid-America Chapter, was named to the "2012 Class of Influential Women" by *KC Business* magazine.

**'84 Tina Crimi Schaeffer** recently was promoted to partner at Mueller Prost PC, a financial and tax services firm in St. Louis, where she also is director of tax services. She specializes in developing long-range strategies to minimize taxes, especially in the real estate and service industries. She joined the firm in 1984. She received her bachelor of science in accounting from Avila and is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the Missouri Society of Certified Public Accountants.

**'85 Rhonda Rice Martin** is a certified public accountant working for Beverly Powell CPA in the Kansas City area.

**'88 Mary Akamatsu** lives in Naples, Fla. where she works as a physician agreement coordinator for the Health Management Association.

**'94 Nancy Sorensen** recently retired from the Missouri Department of Corrections, Board of Probation and Parole. She received her bachelor of arts in sociology from Avila University.

**'94 Kate Egan** recently accepted a position as assistant company manager for the Broadway revival of *Evita* starring Ricky Martin, Elena Roger and Michael Cerveris. After five years touring the U.S., she has made a home in New York City until further notice.

**'97 Traci Waugh Rinehart** is a teacher at Timothy Lutheran Church and lives in Blue Springs, Mo.

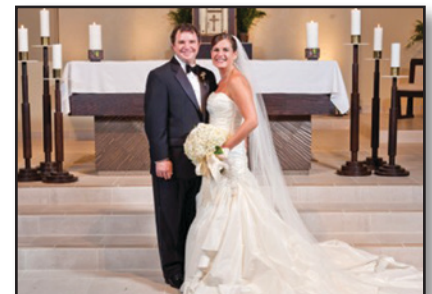
**'97 Aimee Albrecht Bishop** will be graduating from St. Mary's University in Leavenworth, Kan. in May 2012 with her master's in business administration and an emphasis in healthcare management. She works as chief MRI technologist at Cass Regional Medical Center in Peculiar, Mo.

**'97, '02 Jennifer Dusenberg-Schroer** is the director of marketing for Gemaco, a casino playing card company located in Blue Springs, Mo.

**'00 Bob Turner** joined Travelers Insurance in October, 2011 as the Midwest Region Field Manager for boiler and machinery in the risk control division. Bob and his family have been living in Edmond, Okla., but are relocating back to the Kansas City area.



**'01 Erika Goeckeritz Petzold** welcomed her second child, daughter Abigail Faith Petzold, July 6, 2011. She joins big brother Wyatt. Erika, who earned her bachelor's in information science in 2001 and master's in business administration in 2005, resides with her family in Prairie Village, Kan.



**'01 Anne Alexiou** works in sales at PowerPlay, lives in Kansas City,



Mo. and was married Aug. 27, 2011.

**'02 Tekia Thompson** is assistant manager of merriment at the Culinary Center of Kansas City. She also is a consulting "head foodie" at Snow & Company, a cocktail and café lounge in downtown Kansas City. She previously worked in corporate communications.

**'02 Melody Howard Scarlett** is a sales and applications specialist at Midwest Medical Imaging in Omaha, Neb.

**'02 Melissa Vasko Turner** is a registered nurse for Parallon Workforce Management Solutions, a healthcare staffing management company located in Franklin, Tenn.

**'03 Ivori Smith** is a financial aid coordinator at The Kansas City Art Institute.

**'04 Brian Gilmore** recently was promoted to senior manager, clinical data standards, at Celgene Corporation. He and wife, Amy, live in Raymore, Mo.

**'04 Mark Whitfield** is a migration analyst for LCC International, the largest independent telecom services company in the world, with offices in more than 50 countries worldwide.

**'04 Andre Brooks** is a personal banker at UMB Bank.

**'04 Steve Burdge Jr.** was promoted in January to district manager of Kansas City at Mattress Firm Inc. He oversees 10 stores in the Kansas City area.

**'05 Lauren Brown** recently accepted a full-time, tenure-track teaching position at Mott Community College in Flint, Mich. Brown, who earned her bachelor of arts in psychology and master of science in counseling psychology in 2008, had taught as an adjunct at the college and more recently was a counselor at a community mental health center.

**'06 Elise Hull Wendt** is a firefighter for the Liberty, Mo. Fire Department.

**'07 Teia Blanchfield** works at Shawnee Mission Medical Center and recently was named to the "2012 Class of Influential Women" by *KC Business* magazine.

**'09 Ashley Townsend** is a risk assurance associate at PricewaterhouseCoopers, a financial consulting firm in Kansas City, Mo.



**'09 Victor Gray** works as a sales consultant at McCarthy Morse Chevrolet and got married July 30, 2011 to Courtney Biller-Gray at Church of the Nativity Catholic Parish in Leawood.

**'10 Cecile O'Hara** lives in Naples, Fla. where she is attending the Ave Maria School of Law. She is scheduled to graduate in May 2013.

**'10 Jamie Kenney** is a second grade teacher in the Clinton, Mo. school district.

**'10 Lisa Cockerel Watkins** was promoted to division manager within her division at Children's Mercy Hospital & Clinics.

**'11 Austin Speer** and **'11 Megan Morgan Speer** were married on Oct. 8, 2011.



## SEEKING AVILA YEARBOOKS!

Do you have an Avila yearbook collecting dust? We'd love to borrow it to scan and add to the Avila collection.

Contact Susan Randolph, Director of Alumni Services, if you have a yearbook you can donate or allow us to scan. Susan can be reached at 816-501-3780 or by email at [susan.randolph@avila.edu](mailto:susan.randolph@avila.edu).

## Let Avila Be Your Host!

Alumni, are you getting together with some friends from Avila? Why not meet on Avila's campus? The University has a variety of meeting spaces, and we would love to help you find a mutually beneficial time for your group to have lunch, play bridge, take a tour, or have an evening gathering. Contact Susan Randolph to learn how Avila can meet your needs at [susan.randolph@avila.edu](mailto:susan.randolph@avila.edu) or call 816-501-3780.



## *in memoriam*

**'38 Lois Greenlee Adams**, 91, passed away Oct. 25, 2011 in Houston. She graduated from the College of St. Teresa, now Avila University, with an associate of arts. Greenlee Adams, a longtime resident of Independence, Mo., was a relative of former U.S. President Harry Truman. She also served as student council president.

**'44 S. Stephana O'Leary**, 89, passed away Jan. 5, 2012 in Sacramento, Calif. of stroke-related complications. An activist nun with a gentle spirit, she helped troubled youths as a social worker in the Sacramento diocese for more than 50 years. She co-founded WIND Youth Services in 1994 as an emergency shelter and support program to help homeless young people escape life on the street. Born in Kansas City, Kan. in 1922, she graduated from the College of St. Teresa, now Avila University, and later earned her master's degree in social work from Catholic University in Washington.

**'48 Elizabeth Beck Ecton**, 84, passed away Feb. 7, 2012. She received a bachelor of science in biology from the College of St. Teresa, now Avila University.

**'75 Ruth Cushman Schutte**, 94, passed away Dec. 26, 2011. She earned a bachelor's in social work from Avila College, now Avila University, when she was 57.

**'76 Charlotte Silverman Rothman** passed away Jan. 24, 2012. She received a bachelor of arts in psychology from Avila College, now Avila University.

**'78 John Chaney**, 87, passed away Feb. 8, 2012. He earned his bachelor of arts in business management from Avila College, now Avila University.

**'94 Robert Foster** passed away Nov. 15, 2011. He earned a bachelor of science in radiological science from Avila College, now Avila University.

**'06, '09 Raina Marie Walker**, 32, passed away Nov. 3, 2011 after a sudden illness. She received her teaching certificate in business education from Avila University in 2006 and master's in education from Avila in 2009.

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**Mary A. Thornhill**, a friend of Avila University, passed away Jan. 7, 2012.

**George Reintjes**, a friend of Avila University, passed away Dec. 6, 2011.

**S. Colette Doering**, 89, passed away Dec. 26, 2011. She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet Sept. 15, 1943 and was a Sister of St. Joseph for 67 years.

**To make a memorial gift, please visit [avila.edu/give](http://avila.edu/give)**



# New programs expand curriculums

As part of its overall mission to best serve its students, Avila University always strives to remain on the cutting edge with its course and degree offerings. To that end, the university will offer two new degrees and a new concentration that will enhance Avila's already stellar reputation for fully preparing its students for a 21st-century workforce.

## RN to BSN Program

This new degree offering, which will operate through Avila's Advantage adult education program, will allow registered nurses to pursue a bachelor's degree in nursing.

"We're creating this RN to BSN program in response to the future of nursing initiatives to advance nursing education," said Susan Fetsch, RN, Ph.D., dean of Avila University's School of Nursing.

The program, scheduled to start with the fall 2012 semester, will feature two tracks. A management track puts students on the path to increase career opportunities in health care management. A clinical track allows students to focus on the clinical aspects of nursing, promoting growth and movement within clinical areas.

"Research demonstrates that when you have more BSN nurses providing direct patient care, there are better patient outcomes," said Cheri Hunt, RN, MHA, NEA-BC, vice president for patient care services/chief nursing officer at Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, Mo. "The acuity of patients and associated technology requirements mean that nurses need to have not only good clinical skills and knowledge, but also an ability to think and reason at a high level.

"Health care has to have nurses prepared at the bachelor's level. Children's Mercy is looking at aggressively moving in that direction."

"We're being responsive to the need to greater educate the nursing workforce," Fetsch said. "And, by making the program part of Avila Advantage, we're combining the quality of Avila's nursing education with the flexibility that our accelerated adult education program offers."

## Software Engineering

Avila's School of Science & Health is adding a degree in software engineering, created to meet expanding needs for highly-qualified professionals in today's workforce.

A recent major study on job growth from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, which projected job growth for all occupations for the period of 2008-18, indicated a significant growth in career opportunities for software engineers in the coming decade. While the study projected a little more than a 10 percent increase in all jobs during the period, the growth for computer-related occupations projected to be 22 percent. A further breakout of computer-related occu-

pations showed that the number of software engineering jobs projected to grow by 32 percent.

Many of the fastest-expanding software companies in the U.S. – namely medical records software company Cerner and Perceptive Software – are headquartered in the Kansas City area.

"With the projected increase in job opportunities in software engineering, this new major is just what our community needs," said Patrick Kopp, assistant professor and chair of computer science in the School of Science & Health. "Software engineering is for the person who relishes a good challenge – constructing software systems is creative and stimulating work. And, you'll find few people prouder than someone who has worked on the design and implementation of a major system."

## Sports Communication Concentration

Communication majors in the School of Visual and Communication Arts who want to pursue a career in sports media will be able to elect a concentration in sports communication.

"The sports communication program is designed to give students hands-on experience with sports industry clients," said Dotty Hamilton, Ph.D., dean of the School of Visual and Communication Arts. "Building a portfolio of real client work will showcase student skills and enhance their ability to land jobs in the growing field of sports media."

Avila's communications department already has a history of success in the field of sports communication. Alumni have found success in the sports media field: Zac Choate '09 is a sports anchor with KTTC-TV in Minnesota; Emily Hoskins '09 is the director of promotions for the Kansas City T-Bones baseball team; Max Thompson '06 writes for ESPN.com and ESPN the Magazine; Ben Digman '07 produces "The Post Game" for Yahoo Sports. 📺





# Fall athletic teams turn in banner seasons

The 2011 fall athletics season at Avila University promised to be a memorable one before a single football was snapped, a soccer ball kicked, or volleyball spiked. The university was unveiling a brand new all-purpose, turfed athletic complex, opening a new basketball pavilion and hosting football and soccer games on campus for the first time.

Excitement was in the air.

And, the Eagles teams lived up to the billing, posting some of the best seasons on record.

- The football team doubled its victory total from the previous season, posted the second-best record in the school's short history in the sport and set several team marks along the way.
- The volleyball team multiplied its win total more than five times from the 2010 season, finishing 16-17 and qualifying for the Heart of America Athletic Conference post-season tournament.
- The women's soccer team lost just three games the entire season and advanced deep into the HAAC tournament.
- For the second straight season – and, just the second year of its existence – the men's cross country team qualified a runner for the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics national meet.
- The men's and women's golf teams, under new head coach Robin Nigro, also made great strides, placing high in several tournaments during the season.

The Eagles football team, under new head coach Justin Berna, started slowly, losing its first five games, but stuck together and rallied to win four of its last five to finish 4-6. That ranks second best only to the 5-5 mark posted by the Eagles in 2003.

The Eagles set three school records: points against a conference opponent (50 versus Graceland), touchdown passes in a game (4) and all-conference awards (15). And, the Eagles were awarded their first ever All-America designation when senior safety Tyler Cardwell was named to the second-team defense by BSN Sports.

"We improved in every aspect but one," Berna said. "I was very happy at how the guys got a little better every week and especially happy about the pride all the guys showed about playing football at Avila."

Berna is even more excited about the prospects for further improvement next season.

"We have a good number of players coming back, and we've already signed 27," he said.

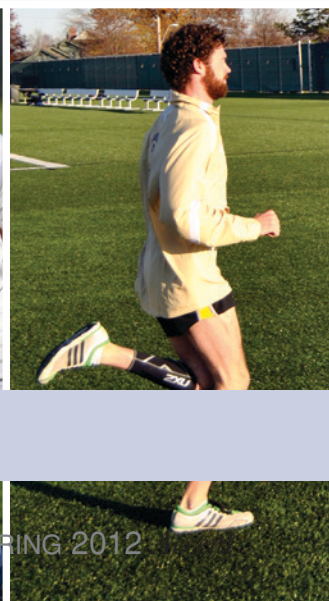
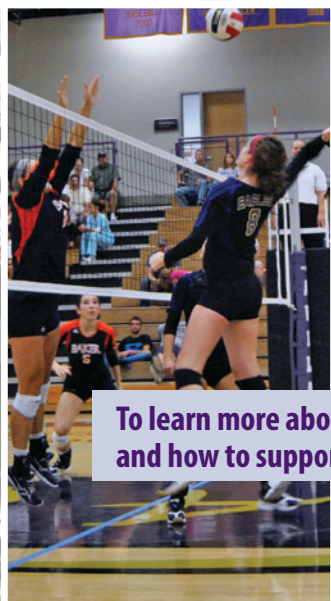
When it came to a one-season turnaround, however, the gridiron had nothing on the volleyball team. In coach Krista Newman's first season, 2010, the Eagles won just three of 22 matches. In 2011, they improved to 16-17 and advanced to the HAAC tournament.

Newman also had for the first time a first-team all-conference selection in junior setter Katelyn Frakes, while freshman setter Emily Koch was second-team all-conference.

"I'm excited about the leadership the upperclassmen have shown as well as the way the underclassmen have stepped up and handled their business on the court," Newman said. "This past season was just the beginning of what is to come for Avila volleyball."

Women's soccer continued its successful run of winning seasons, finishing 12-3-5 and advancing to the semifinals of the HAAC tournament. Losing just one senior starter (first-team all-conference defender Alex Jung) and the return of first-team all-conference midfielder Cara Duke is a sign of even better things to come for the Eagles.

Senior runner Adam McGovern placed in the top five at the conference cross country meet and qualified for the national meet for the second straight year. And, both the men's and women's golf teams played well during their fall seasons. The men's team placed second at both the Ottawa and Missouri Valley invitationals, while two golfers, Geoff Gahn and Keenan Richcreek, both finished as individual runners-up. The women won the Missouri Valley Invite, Mattie Willmore won individually, and the team was second at Ottawa. 🏆



To learn more about Avila's athletic program, upcoming games and how to support the Eagles, visit [avila.edu/athletics](http://avila.edu/athletics).



# Women's basketball team makes history ... again

Back in late October of last year, Avila University women's basketball coach Larry Williams was having doubts his 2011-12 squad could repeat the history established by the 2010-11 team. A slew of Williams' players were nursing injuries. In fact, at the beginning of this season, only eight players were available to practice.

As it turned out, Williams was right ... sort of. The Lady Eagles didn't repeat history of a season ago, when they won the Heart of America Athletic Conference post-season tournament and qualified for the NAIA national tournament for the first time. No, this season's Eagles went that one better, not only qualifying for the national championships but winning a round with a stunning, double-overtime upset of Freed-Hardeman (Tenn.), the No. 3-ranked team in the nation.

It was the first time an Avila athletics team won a game at the NAIA national tournament level.

"It was a huge win for us and huge win for the program," Williams said. "It's great for putting Avila on the map."

It was a far cry from what Williams had been feeling just five months earlier.

"In October, we didn't have enough kids to practice," he said. "In November, I thought if we won two or three non-conference games we'd be lucky."

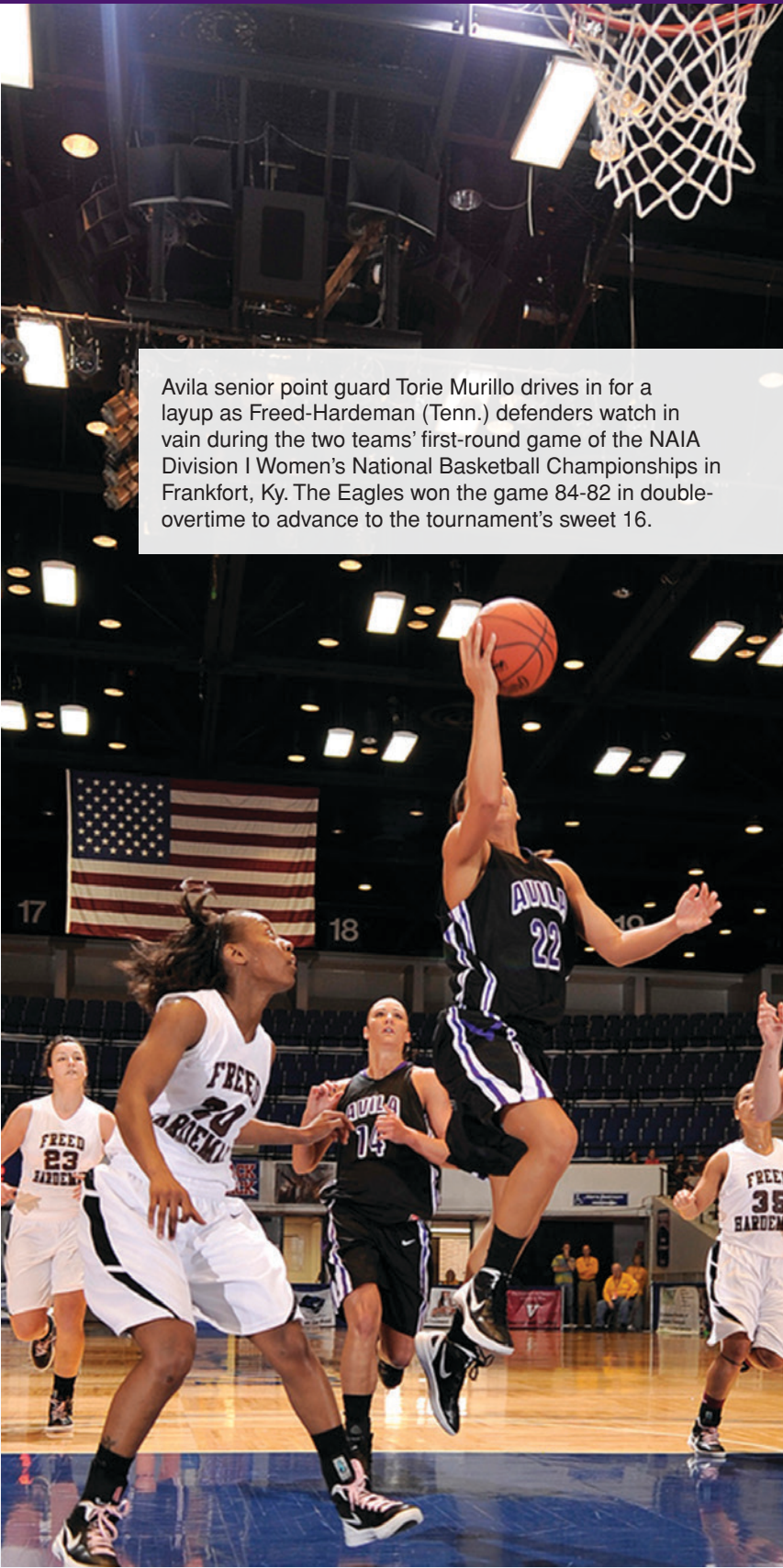
Instead, the Eagles came out of November 5-4, then won their first three HAAC games. They didn't quite win the conference, but finished second, one game behind MidAmerica Nazarene, with a conference mark of 14-4. They slipped up in the semifinals of the conference tournament, losing to Graceland, but qualified for the national tournament because of their runner-up finish in the conference regular season.

The Eagles' 84-82 victory over Freed-Hardeman was the biggest upset of the tournament and catapulted them into the sweet 16. They fell in that round to eventual final four team Georgetown (Ky.).

"It just shows the team attitude of these girls," Williams said. "We had to have everyone contributing. The kids just really battled and came through all the adversity."

For the second straight season, Torie Murillo, a senior point guard, was selected as the HAAC's defensive player of the year and first-team all-conference. She also led the nation in steals for the second straight season. She also was named to the third team on the NAIA All-America team. Senior shooting guard Brittany Townsend was a second-team all-conference pick, and freshman forward Rebekah Capeder received honorable mention.

"I think we had a great season, especially toward the end," Townsend said. "We didn't win the conference tour-



Avila senior point guard Torie Murillo drives in for a layup as Freed-Hardeman (Tenn.) defenders watch in vain during the two teams' first-round game of the NAIA Division I Women's National Basketball Championships in Frankfort, Ky. The Eagles won the game 84-82 in double-overtime to advance to the tournament's sweet 16.

nament, which was a big letdown, but then we got the big win at nationals.

"I'm really happy with the way the season ended. I don't think it could've ended in a better way. We made history last year and then turned around and did it again this year." 🏀



## AVILA UNIVERSITY BOARD OF TRUSTEES: 2012–2013

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## GOPPERT THEATRE

April 26–28 at 8 p.m.

April 29 at 2 p.m.

Conceived for the stage by Steve Cuden & Frank Wildhorn; Book and Lyrics by Leslie Bricusse; Music by Frank Wildhorn; Orchestrations by Kim Scharnberg; Arrangements by Jason Howland

**For tickets, call 816-501-3699**



# Call for Nominations

Do you know an outstanding Avila alumnus? Have you been inspired by his or her contributions to the community? Let us honor them at this year's alumni awards ceremony during Homecoming weekend, Oct. 12–14, 2012.

Visit the Web at [avila.edu/alumni](http://avila.edu/alumni) to nominate an alumnus and to read more about the various awards that will be bestowed during Homecoming.

All nominations must be received by July 1. For additional questions or comments, please call Susan Randolph, director of alumni relations, at 816-501-3780 or e-mail [susan.randolph@avila.edu](mailto:susan.randolph@avila.edu)





## Paying it back ... and forward

**Karen MacLean  
and Allison MacLean Lawrence '05**

### Securing Avila's Heritage

With a flexible endowment, a portion of donated proceeds will go directly to scholarships awarded presently while the remainder goes into Avila's endowment. Using a \$20,000 minimum as an example, a donor pledges \$5,000 a year for five years. Out of each payment, \$1,000 is used immediately to fund a scholarship in the amount that will be available after the endowment is fully funded. The remaining \$4,000 is allocated to the endowment fund and allowed to grow over time. At the end of the pledge period, five scholarships already have been awarded, and the endowment is fully funded. Beginning in the sixth year, the 5 percent dividend from the endowment now funds the scholarship in perpetuity. To find out more about flexible endowments or other ways of gifting, please contact Jessie Fuller, senior director of development, at 816-501-3613.

## Avila Heritage

**A**sk Allison MacLean Lawrence '05 what Avila University meant to her seven years ago, and the answer goes far beyond books and degrees. In fact, Avila served as a sort of lifeline for Lawrence, one given to her when she needed it most.

Allison – who goes by Allie – and her parents had moved back to Overland Park, Kan. from Wichita, and she had just enrolled at Avila when, as her mother Karen MacLean put it, “all of a sudden, her world turned upside down.” Allie’s father, Doug, was diagnosed with cancer in his liver. Just two months later, he lost his battle, leaving Karen and Allie devastated.

Naturally, Karen worried about her only child’s future without her father. But they received support from the Avila community they never expected.

“Avila really offered me a warm place to land at a very difficult time in my life,” said Allie, who today teaches second grade at Cottonwood Point Elementary in Olathe, Kan. “They focused on me and not the schoolwork. They were very supportive and helped my mom, too, because she was comforted knowing I was in such a good place.”

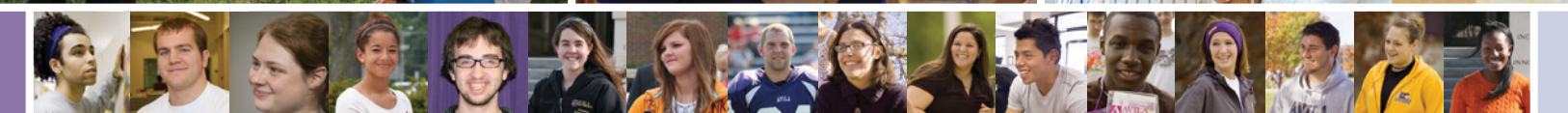
Karen said, “The love, support and sense of community at Avila was what brought Allie through all that. It was just overwhelming.”

Now, Karen and Allie are giving back as members of Avila’s Heritage Society. They’ve established the C. Douglas MacLean Scholarship Fund, a flexible endowment established to provide scholarship funding to Avila students pursuing a degree in education.

“We’re honoring my late husband, but I’m also honoring my daughter as well,” Karen said, “because I believe she’s as strong as she is and the person she is because of the people and support she received at Avila.”



Sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet



# Avila University Prepares Students Today for Opportunities Tomorrow

As a Catholic school, Avila University is committed to helping students become the best version of themselves. Through their educational journey, students begin to realize their full potential as we open doors for them in school and in life.

Avila University provides a wide variety of academic scholarships up to \$15,000 annually. We also offer performance grants in many areas, including athletics, campus ministry, theatre and more.  
For more information, contact the Office of Admission.

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